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EXCLUSIVE

Eviction threatens lives of Travellers at Dale Farm

by **SADIE ROBINSON**

BASILDON COUNCIL wants to forcibly remove around 400 Travellers from Dale Farm in Essex, making them homeless.

The eviction would cut off water and electricity to the site—and put the lives of several Travellers in serious jeopardy.

Grattan Puxon, a campaigner for Travellers at Dale Farm, told Socialist Worker, “One man who lives at Dale Farm needs to use a nebulizer machine 24 hours a day to help him breathe.

“It runs on electricity. If they switch off the electricity, they’ll kill him.”

Mary Flynn, a Traveller at the site, suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and has lung damage. She uses a nebulizer, as well as inhalers, to help her breathe.

Mary told Socialist Worker, “I’m in awful health. I was in hospital last week and I’m always going to the doctors.

“There are cancer patients here and people have other ailments. We have nowhere to go—we need to stay here.”

The eviction notices, issued by Basildon council, state that “water and electricity supply will be cut off during the site clearance process”.

Travellers are terrified about what will happen if they are forced onto the road—with no permanent address or access to a GP.

Margaret Gammell has diabetes, heart problems and high blood pressure. She has to take sets of medicines every day.

She’s lived at Dale Farm for eight years. “I have to go to the doctors to have my blood tests,” she said. “But where



Mary Flynn

would I get any help if I’m beside the road?

“And what will it be like with no facilities, no toilets, no running water?”

Margaret said the stress of the eviction is “getting me down”. But the Travellers have pledged to fight the eviction, and they are asking people to come and join them.

Margaret said, “We’re entitled to rights like anyone else

and we’ll fight to the bitter end. “We’re not going to walk away. Would you leave your home without a battle?”

The stress of the looming eviction is making people’s health problems worse.

Traveller Mary Ann McCarthy told Socialist Worker, “Most of the women here are on anti-depressants.”

The council says Travellers must leave Dale Farm by 31 August or face forcible removal. It is prepared to spend an astonishing £18 million to make people homeless.

The Travellers have lived at the site for years and own the land. An eviction would set a dangerous precedent for others. We have to resist it.

■ To get involved with the campaign to defend Dale Farm go to <http://dalefarm.wordpress.com>

CIVIL SERVICE WORKERS

Wick wins work after powerful campaign

by **JOHN DAVIDSON**,
PCS Revenue & Customs
group executive

EIGHTEEN workers in Revenue & Customs’ northernmost mainland office have won their long-running campaign against closure and redundancy.

The Wick office in the Highlands has been threatened with closure since 2004, when New Labour announced 104,000 civil service job cuts.

This year, as the closure date approached, the PCS union and local members launched the Wick Wants Work campaign.

The experienced staff are just the people needed to close the £120 billion tax gap. But instead the government wanted to waste money sacking them. Proportionally, the loss of 18 jobs from Wick is the equivalent of thousands being lost in London.

PCS group executive committee member Hamish

Drummond and local rep Allan Tait helped the Wickers win substantial support from their local MP and MSP.

They also lobbied the neighbouring constituency of MP Danny Alexander, the first secretary to the treasury.

Our banner was at the Highland TUC conference, the STUC conference, and at the PCS conference in Brighton.

Stickers, badges and leaflets were distributed, a Facebook group and online petition were set up and I chaired a hustings event in Wick for candidates standing in the recent Scottish parliament elections.

The staff all rejected voluntary exit offers.

Last week management announced that the office will remain open until at least 2014.

The government has been forced into yet another U-turn, and we can all take heart from this David vs Goliath victory.

COUNCIL WORKERS

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THE GOVERNMENT